



Sustainability Policy Statement

Purpose

The purpose of this Sustainability Policy Statement is to outline how

- Our school promotes sustainability and climate action, through our actions and activities.
- To identify and celebrate areas of best practice that are embedded within our school culture.
- To set targets to ensure further progress.

Sustainability can be defined as “the ability to exist and develop without depleting natural resources for the future” (DES, 2023, p. 3).

ESD aims to ensure that “by 2030, all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”. (Sustainable Development Goal 4.7)

Scope

“A “whole-school” approach to sustainable development is one that extends beyond the curriculum and addresses the entire planning and management of the school facility” (DES, 2023, p. 5). Sustainability is a community issue and applies to all the pupils, teachers, SNAs and staff of our school. Parents and guardians should note and where possible, promote the statement. The Board of

Management of the school will ensure that decisions made in respect of our school align with this policy statement.

Vision, Mission and Values

- Our school's vision aims at creating and cultivating a happy, caring and nurturing environment; whilst fostering a culture of excellence, innovation and compassion, where every pupil thrives socially, emotionally and academically, striving to reach their full potential, develops a sense of honesty, tolerance and responsibility, a lifelong love of learning and a commitment to making positive contributions to society. Our school motto is 'Mol an óige agus tiocfaidh sí' meaning praise the young and they will flourish which is at the heart of everything we do.
- Our school's mission aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and other people. Our school aims to so do by creating a safe and inclusive learning environment which celebrates diversity, nurtures creativity, promotes critical thinking and instils a strong sense of responsibility towards oneself and others. Through innovative teaching practices and a supportive school community we strive to inspire our pupils to become compassionate individuals and future leaders who embrace challenges with resilience and empathy.
- Our school's values are rooted in our Catholic ethos which underpins all aspects of our school life. Our school strives to ensure an atmosphere of mutual respect, where every member of our school community feels respected, valued and supported, working together in a spirit of encouragement and enthusiasm and where the value of every individual in the school community is recognised and successes are celebrated.

- Our commitment to sustainability, environmental awareness and climate action aligns seamlessly with our school’s core values. We believe that by fostering a culture of responsibility and stewardship, we can empower our pupils to become active agents in the conservation and sustainability of the environment thus safeguarding our planet for future generations. Through interdisciplinary learning experiences and community partnerships, we integrate environmental education into our curriculum, promoting sustainable practices and encouraging pupils to explore innovative solutions to global challenges. In so doing, we reinforce our dedication to care, excellence, respect and equality, while fostering a strong sense of community and a collective responsibility towards building a more sustainable and equitable world.

The 2nd National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030, published in 2022, informs the content of the following Sustainability Policy Statement and has been prepared as part the School Sector Climate Action Mandate. This statement is in keeping with the principles and themes of ESD to 2030 and has been ratified by the Board of Management of our school.

Whole School Approach to Sustainability

- Our school has adopted this Sustainability Policy Statement. It clearly details the aims and objectives of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in our school, its relationship to the vision and mission of the school.
- Our school recognises Education for Sustainable Development as a cross-curricular theme and this is co-ordinated effectively in our school.
- Opportunities are identified to introduce and address sustainability in the classroom in our school.

- Our school is a member of the Irish Schools Sustainability Network (www.issn.ie).
- Our school keeps up to date with developments in ESD and is registered for receipt of the quarterly ESD newsletter (<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/a1d6e-education-for-sustainable-development-newsletter/>).

Environmental Sustainability

Green-Schools is a leading environmental management and education programme for schools run by the Environmental Unit of An Taisce.

- Our school partakes in the Green Schools Programme (<https://greenschoolsireland.org/>) and has done for a number of years.
- Our school is a Green flag school, having successfully obtained many flags. Most recently our 8th Green flag for Global Citizenship was raised on June 27th 2023 and was celebrated by our whole school community, having been collected by members of our Green Schools committee at a ceremony the previous week.
- Our Green school code is
Everybody save the world
Now is the time to act
Energy is worth saving
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
Get on your bike and cycle
Your actions make a difference
- Our school is actively committed to, encourages and promotes Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.
- Our school promotes sustainable transport including where possible, walking, cycling and scooting to school (our school partakes in the Walk

to School Week and through the Green Schools BOW WOW (Bike on Wednesday Walk on Wednesday)). There are a number of bike racks and bike shelters on our school grounds.

- Our school engages with SEAI education programme of curriculum based energy resources, pupil workshops and teacher CPD (<https://www.seai/plan-your-energy-journey/schools/primary-school/>).
- Our Principal, teachers and school secretaries utilise e-mail and text instead of paper newsletters/letters when contacting parents thus significantly reducing the school's level of paper use.
- E-correspondence is used for internal communication within our school thus also reducing the school's level of paper use.
- Our school, prints/photocopies only what is necessary, utilising double sided printing/photocopying to reduce the amount of paper used and only using plastics (laminating) when essential.
- Recycled containers/materials are often collected and used in Art and recycled containers for planting seeds in, in our school.
- Our school encourages reusable containers for lunch thus removing the need for tinfoil and cling film. Fruit peels from (oranges, bananas, etc.) and waste (apple cores) are put in the classroom's compost bin but all other lunch waste is brought home.
- All classrooms in our school have a recycling, compost and general waste bin.
- Our school is committed to energy reduction, turning lights off in rooms not in use; the classrooms (in the older part of the school) have sensor lights since the building upgrade in 2020, which turn off after a period when no movement has been detected.

- Our school promotes and facilitates outdoor learning (our school has an outdoor classroom, a school garden with (raised beds, apple trees, a small polytunnel), water butts, a woodland fairy trail, a recently planted beech hedgerow along the school yard perimeter, a number of trees which are all labelled around the school field, mini forest areas, a composting area, a willow dome, school murals of Irish mythical legends and a running track around our school field).
- Our school collects rain water using water butts which is used for both watering the flowers at the front of our school and the fruit, vegetables and flowers grown in our school garden.
- Our school promotes and facilitates biodiversity (a bug hotel, a wild flower patch, bird tables/houses, willow fedges, tree planting schemes).
- Our school actively promotes and fosters an attitude of care and responsibility towards the natural environment.
- Our school engages with programmes that support and promote Environmental education such as ECO UNESCO's ECO-Week (<https://ecounesco.ie/10-18-youth-programmes/eco-weeks/>).

Social Sustainability

- Our school is an inclusive school with many pupils enrolled having additional needs; it also has two ASD classes (Droichead) and every effort is made to support each and every pupil in our school and to support and accommodate their needs accordingly.
- Our school strives to prepare pupils for life as citizens of a global community.
- Our school recognises the importance of and strives to ensure gender equity within our school.

- Our school strives to create and foster a positive atmosphere in the school and build positive relationships with teachers, SNAs, school staff, pupils, all stakeholders; where positive pupil behaviour is encouraged at all times ‘Kind hands and Kind words’.
- Our school fosters a spirit of peace.

Economic Sustainability

- A non-competitive ethos of co-operation and sharing of resources is modelled in our school’s allocation of its resources.
- Pupils are involved in the decision-making process on some resource allocation within our school (Student Council) and are regularly consulted on their views.
- Pupils are provided with opportunities to learn small business skills (Junior Entrepreneur Programme (JEP) in Sixth Class).
- Our school’s fund-raising activities reflect and actively demonstrate ethical and sustainable principles (Annual Jumble Sale; with the money raised going to the local St. Vincent de Paul). This event is primarily run by the Sixth Class pupils in collaboration with and under the supervision and guidance of the Sixth Class teachers.
- Our school also partakes annually in the Christmas Shoebox Appeal.
- Our school’s Parents Association run a book appeal, where books pupils have already read are brought in by the pupils, these are collected and then a day is held in our school library where all pupils get the opportunity to attend (class timetable) and take a selection of books they would each like to read and bring them home. The first was held in June 2024 and it was very successful.
- Our school’s Parents Association also hold a uniform swap annually in the first week of July in our school hall.

- Our school buildings are maintained to a high standard, with best practise in the area of sustainability in mind.
- Our school educates pupils on and promotes the principles of a circular economy, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle at every possible opportunity (Book Swap/Uniform Swap) and hopefully further swaps (Halloween costume/First Holy Communion clothes) will be held over the coming school year.

Cultural Sustainability

- Our school ethos aims to foster pupil's self-esteem, along with a mutual regard and respect for fellow pupils, teachers, SNAs and staff and to create and foster positive social interaction and relationships.
- Our school ethos in tandem with the curriculum, strives to prepare pupils for life in an increasingly multicultural society.
- Our school engages with Global Citizenship Education programmes such as the INTO Global Citizenship School (<https://sites.google.com/view/globalcitizenshipschool/home>) and World Wise Global Schools (<https://www.worldwiseschools.ie/>).
- Our school demonstrates a commitment to community engagement and encourages the community's involvement with the school. Our school supports the work of our local Tidy Towns Association.
- Our school has an active role in supporting cultural diversity both within the school itself and in the wider school community.

Teacher Competence

- Our teachers are supported in building their own capacity in the area of ESD through CPD provided during Croke Park hours.
- Our school leadership team are committed to sustainability through a whole school approach.
- Our teachers, SNAs and ancillary school staff appreciate the three pillars of sustainability: environmental, social and economic.



Student Competence

- Our pupils are encouraged and supported to participate in peer to peer learning activities.
- Our pupils are educated on the importance of healthy food choices through lessons on the food pyramid (SPHE) and they get to experience eating fresh fruit and vegetables as our school partakes in Food Dudes and get the opportunity to plant potatoes in March, then watch grow, dig up and cook from the school garden in June annually.
- Our pupils engage with the growing of vegetables together with their teachers and/or with the Incredible Edibles programme.
- Our school partakes in the Green Schools programme.
- Our school currently has a Student Council and a Green School Committee who are involved in decision making in our school.

- Our pupil's competency on sustainability is further supported through talks on and information provided by external facilitators on this topic.

ESD whole school targets for 2024/2025

Our whole school targets for 2024/2025 are:

September to December 2024

- To complete and submit our school's application for ESD funding (midnight on Friday October 11th 2024 deadline); to successfully obtain this funding and to progress our plan as outlined in this document for the school year 2024/2025.
- To ensure the recycling bins in all classrooms are emptied, a schedule will be set up with Sixth Class pupils collecting and emptying these bins and leaving in a central location for collection by our school caretaker Eamon who will ensure the recycling material is put in the recycling bin outdoors.
- Our school will have an external facilitator/expert (Dr. Paddy Madden) in our school to provide CPD to teachers on the growing of seasonal vegetables in our school garden and also to support pupil competency on this topic.

January to June 2025

- To clearly display information on sustainability and sustainable practices in prominent and accessible places within our school.
- To further develop and enhance our school grounds to aid biodiversity and pupil learning through the establishing of a pond, the woodland trail/wellness walkway, incorporating a sensory element to make it inclusive for all our pupils, continued flower and vegetable growing in our school garden's raised beds; including the replanting of the two flower beds in the President's Garden at the back of our school.

- To invest in a new hot composter and wormery and to put a whole school composting policy in place in our school with engagement from all classes with pupils from the Student Council/Green Schools Committee to empty the compost bins from all classrooms regularly.
- To further develop outdoor education through creating new tree signage and running a Pilot Forest School Programme in our school with our Third class pupils.
- Our school to engage with Picker Pals (<https://pickerpalsworld.org>) with the pupils in Second class.
- To plant a box hedge at the school entrance for our school's name 'Scoil na Mainistreach' (SnaM).

Implementation and Review

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on the 4th of October 2024. To ensure our school strives to improve its work within sustainability and climate action, the Statement will be reviewed annually.

Signed: 

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: 

Principal

Date of next review: October 2025

Reference

Department of Education. (2023). *School Sector – Climate Action Mandate Sustainability Guidelines VI August 2023*. Ireland. Department of Education.